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In re Application of
Thomas B. Garman
Application No. 10/646,245
Filed: August 22, 2003
Attorney Docket No. 29953-209459

ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition under the unintentional provisions of 37 CFR 1.137(b), filed July 19, 2007, to revive the above-identified application.

The petition is **DISMISSED**.

Any request for reconsideration of this decision must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b)." This is **not** a final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 704.

The application became abandoned for failure to reply in a timely manner to the non-final Office action mailed June 28, 2006, which set a shortened statutory period for reply of three (3) months. No extensions of time under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a) were obtained. Accordingly, the application became abandoned on September 29, 2006.

A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by: (1) the required reply, unless previously filed; (2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(m); (3) a statement that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) was unintentional; and (4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(d)) required by 37 CFR 1.137(d). Where there is a question as to whether either the abandonment or the delay in filing a petition under 37 CFR 1.137 was unintentional, the Director may require additional information. See MPEP 711.03(c)(II)(C) and (D). The instant petition lacks item(s) (3).

Petitioner, through the affidavit of Jodi L. Yingling (Yingling), asserts the delay was unintentional in that the patent owner had an obligation to notify the licensee if the patent owner declined to continue to prosecute the application and failed to do so. With respect to the affidavit of Yingling, it is noted Yingling does not appear to be the party having the right or authority to reply to avoid abandonment (or not reply) of the application as Yingling is neither an applicant for patent, an intervening assignee of the application, or other party in interest. While, Yingling states the patent owner had an obligation to notify the licensee if the patent owner declined to continue to prosecute the application and failed to do so, Yingling has provided no evidence of such an agreement. Accordingly, statements from all persons involved in the abandonment of the application including Thomas Garman, Stuart I. Smith, Ryan M. Flandro and James T. Carmichael and what they knew with respect to assignments, license agreements, and abandonment with respect to the application are required. Petitioner should further explain why the decision to abandon the instant application should not be binding on all parties and why the decision to abandon the instant application was not an intentional delay.

Petitioner has not shown to the satisfaction of the Director that the entire delay herein was unintentional within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) and 37 CFR 1.137(b).

35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) applies to the situation of the above-identified application (i.e., to the revival of an abandoned application), however, it precludes the Director from reviving the above-identified application. The patent statute at 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) authorizes the Director to revive an "unintentionally abandoned application." The legislative history of Public Law 97-247 reveals that the purpose of 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) is to permit the Office to have more discretion than in 35 U.S.C. §§ 133 or 151 to revive abandoned applications in appropriate circumstances, but places a limit on this discretion, stating that "[u]nder this section a petition accompanied by either a fee of \$500 or a fee of \$50 would not be granted where the abandonment or the failure to pay the fee for issuing the patent was intentional as opposed to being unintentional or unavoidable." [emphasis added]. See H.R. Rep. No. 542, 97th Cong., 2d Sess. 6-7 (1982), reprinted in 1982 U.S.C.C.A.N. 770-71. The revival of an intentionally abandoned application is

antithetical to the meaning and intent of the statute and regulation.

35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) authorizes the Commissioner to accept a petition "for the revival of an unintentionally abandoned application for a patent." As amended December 1, 1997, 37 CFR 1.137(b)(3) provides that a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by a statement that the delay was unintentional, but provides that "[t]he Commissioner may require additional information where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional." Where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional, the petitioner must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unintentional within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) and 37 CFR 1.137(b). See In re Application of G, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989). Here, the showing is that applicant intentionally discontinued prosecution and permitted the application to become abandoned, due to its own conclusion that the application was not worth pursuing.

The showing is further that applicant made no effort to seek revival until after becoming aware of what petitioner characterizes as an "error". The language of both 35 USC 41(a)(7) and 37 CFR 1.137(b) are clear and unambiguous, and furthermore, without qualification. That is, the delay in filing the reply during prosecution, as well as in filing the petition seeking revival, must have been, without qualification, "unintentional" for the reply to now be accepted on petition. The Office requires that the entire delay be at least unintentional as a prerequisite to revival of an abandoned application to prevent abuse and injury to the public. See H.R. Rep. No. 542, 97th Cong., 2d Sess. 7 (1982), reprinted in 1982 U.S.C.C.A.N. 771 ("[i]n order to prevent abuse and injury to the public the Commissioner . . . could require applicants to act promptly after becoming aware of the abandonment"). The December 1997 change to 37 CFR 1.137 did not create any new right to overcome an intentional delay in seeking revival, or in renewing an attempt at seeking revival, of an abandoned application. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice, 62 Fed. Reg. 53131, 53160 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 63, 87 (October 21, 1997).

However, both the delay herein in filing the reply during prosecution, and in filing the petition after abandonment, are inconsistent with a finding that the entire delay herein was unintentional, such that revival is proper. Simply put, a course

of conduct resulting in a delay that is, as here, purposefully chosen does not qualify as unintentional delay.

It is further noted that 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) does not require an affirmative finding that the delay was intentional, but only an explanation as to why the petitioner has failed to carry his or her burden to establish that the delay was unintentional. Cf. Commissariat A. L'Energie Atomique v. Watson, 274 F.2d 594, 597, 124 USPQ 126, 128 (D.C. Cir. 1960) (35 U.S.C. § 133 does not require the Commissioner to affirmatively find that the delay was avoidable, but only to explain why the applicant's petition was unavailing); see also In re Application of G, *supra* (petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) denied because the applicant failed to carry the burden of proof to establish that the delay was unintentional).

Here, while petitioner contends that the failure to reply during the pendency of the application was an "error", petitioner nevertheless did not even seek revival until there was a change in circumstance long after abandonment, i.e., until petitioner became aware that the licensee was not notified. However, a change in circumstances that occurred subsequent to the abandonment of an application does not render "unintentional" the delay resulting from a previous deliberate decision to permit an application to be abandoned. These matters simply confuse the question of whether there was a deliberate decision not to continue the prosecution of an application with why there was a deliberate decision not to continue the prosecution of an application. A delay resulting from a deliberately chosen course of action on the part of the applicant does not become an "unintentional" delay within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.137(b) because the applicant does not consider the claims to be patentable over the references relied upon in an outstanding Office action.

While the entire record has been carefully reviewed, the showing of record is inconsistent with a finding that the entire delay herein was unintentional:

Where the applicant deliberately permits an application to become abandoned (e.g., due to a conclusion that the claims are unpatentable, that a rejection in an Office action cannot be overcome, or that the invention lacks sufficient commercial value to justify continued prosecution), the abandonment of such application is considered to be a deliberately chosen course of action, and the resulting

delay cannot be considered as "unintentional" within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.137(b). Likewise, where the applicant deliberately chooses not to seek or persist in seeking the revival of an abandoned application, or where the applicant deliberately chooses to delay seeking the revival of an abandoned application, the resulting delay in seeking revival of the abandoned application cannot be considered as "unintentional" within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.137(b). An intentional delay resulting from a deliberate course of action chosen by the applicant is not affected by: (1) the correctness of the applicant's (or applicant's representative's) decision to abandon the application or not to seek or persist in seeking revival of the application; (2) the correctness or propriety of a rejection, or other objection, requirement, or decision by the Office; or (3) the discovery of new information or evidence, or other change in circumstances subsequent to the abandonment or decision not to seek or persist in seeking revival.

Obviously, delaying the revival of an abandoned application, by a deliberately chosen course of action, until the industry or a competitor shows an interest in the invention (a submarine application) is the antithesis of an "unavoidable" or "unintentional" delay. An intentional abandonment of an application, or an intentional delay in seeking either the withdrawal of a holding of abandonment in or the revival of an abandoned application, precludes a finding of unavoidable or unintentional delay pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice, 62 Fed. Reg. 53132 at 53158-59 (October 10, 1997), reprinted at 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office, 65 at 86 (October 21, 1997) (citations omitted).

Where, as here, the applicant deliberately permits an application to become abandoned (e.g., due to a conclusion that the claims are unpatentable, that a rejection in an Office action cannot be overcome, or that the invention lacks sufficient commercial value to justify continued prosecution), the abandonment of such application is considered to be a deliberately chosen course of action, and the resulting delay cannot be considered as "unintentional" within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.137(b). See In re Application of G, supra. An intentional course of action is not rendered unintentional when, upon reconsideration, the applicant changes his or her mind as to the course of action that should have been taken. See In re Maldague, 10 USPQ2d 1477, 1478 (Comm'r Pat. 1988).

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

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The centralized facsimile number is (571) 273-8300.

Telephone inquiries concerning this decision should be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3208.



Karen Creasy
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